

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
June 19, 2020 MINUTES *(Approved on 08/28/20)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was held at Cannon Mountain's Peabody Lodge. Cannon Mountain General Manager John DeVivo welcomed the Commission.

Call to Order. Vice-chairman Wayne Presby called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Attendance was by roll-call: Wayne Presby/Cog Railway, Paul Fitzgerald/for Public, Ed Bergeron/for Public, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Rep Wayne Moynihan/House, Howie Wemyss/Auto Road, Paul Ingersoll/for Public, Sen Jeb Bradley, Chris Thayer/AMC, Dir Phil Bryce/Div Parks and Rec (DPR), and Tiffany Benna/WMNF designee, who called in from home. Drew Scamman/Townsquare Media arrived shortly thereafter.

Others present introduced themselves: Allen Brooks/AG Office, Rob Kirsch/MWObs, Patrick Hummel/MWSP, Edith Tucker/Berlin Sun, Prof. Tim Lewis/Northern VT University, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk.

Election of Officers. With Chairman Walter Graff having retired last fall, the MWC elected its officers. Mr Middleton nominated Sen. Bradley as chairman; seconded by Mr Fitzgerald. Vote was by roll-call: Mr Fitzgerald YES, Mr Bergeron YES, Commissioner Stewart YES, Mr Middleton YES, Rep Moynihan YES, Mr Wemyss YES, Mr Ingersoll YES, Sen Bradley ABSTAIN, Mr Scamman YES, Mr Thayer YES, Mr Presby YES, and Ms Benna YES. The motion is approved. Mr Middleton nominated Mr Bergeron as vice-chair; seconded by Rep Moynihan. Vote was by roll-call: Mr Fitzgerald YES, Mr Bergeron ABSTAIN, Mr Middleton YES, Rep Moynihan YES, Mr Wemyss YES, Mr Ingersoll YES, Sen Bradley YES, Mr Scamman YES, Mr Thayer YES, Dir Bryce YES, Mr Presby YES, and Ms Benna YES. The motion is approved. Mr Fitzgerald nominated Dir Bryce as Secretary-Treasurer; seconded by Mr Middleton. Dir Bryce proposed to have Ms Tango-Lowy continue to serve as clerk and take the meeting minutes; the members concurred. Vote was by roll-call: Mr Fitzgerald YES, Mr Bergeron YES, Mr Middleton YES, Rep Moynihan YES, Mr Wemyss YES, Mr Ingersoll YES, Sen Bradley YES, Mr Scamman YES, Mr Thayer YES, Dir Bryce ABSTAIN, Mr Presby YES, and Ms Benna YES. The motion is approved. Members thanked Walter Graff and Wayne Presby for having served as officers over the last several years.

Minutes. Mr Ingersoll moved to accept the minutes of August 6, 2019; seconded by Mr Middleton. The minutes were approved as written by roll-call vote: Mr Scamman YES, Mr Thayer ABSTAIN, Dir Bryce YES, Mr Presby YES, Mr Fitzgerald YES, Mr Bergeron YES, Mr Middleton YES, Rep Moynihan YES, Mr Wemyss YES, Mr Ingersoll YES, Sen Bradley YES, and Ms Benna YES. The motion is approved.

Summit Utilities & Sewage Treatment Plant. Mr Hummel reported that Underwood Engineers treatment plant study found that current usage regularly exceeds the effluent load capacity of the plant and is causing accelerated wear to the plant. Underwood recommends replacement of the plant that can handle an increased effluent flow of 30%. Four proposals were received with an estimated construction cost of \$2.4M. DNCR's capital budget funding is \$1.87M, and may use federal LWCF funds for the shortfall. Underwood can complete the design by summer and bid the project in the fall, with construction starting June 2021 and completion in 2022. Members discussed the project, the carrying capacity of the summit and the constraints on capacity, such as water supply, spatial and logistical constraints. The Sherman Adams Building (SAB) has a capacity of 300 people, rated by the state fire marshal. Mr Middleton said Parks may need to consider an admission fee to support the site's funding needs. Sen Bradley will call for a MWC meeting to discuss the carrying capacity and Underwood's final report.

Capital Improvements. DNCR is to present its FY2022-23 capital budget next Tuesday. Members discussed the impact of COVID-19 on the state's revenues and projects being put on hold, the competing capital budget needs, and that bonding allows for the spread of payment.

Mr Hummel reported that DNCR is requesting \$975K for the water system upgrades to replace the underground water tanks and install new tanks adjacent to the SAB to enable year-round use of a single system. DNCR is also looking into recommissioning the well at the Yankee Building.

Summit Operating Plan. Dir Bryce serves on the Governor's Economic Reopening Task Force charged with developing best practice guidance to enable businesses to reopen under the COVID-19 pandemic. He

gave an overview of the state park system operation under the State of Emergency called on March 13th, including the transition to an advance day-use and parking reservation system, reducing park capacity, and re-deploying staff. Dir Bryce and Mr Hummel discussed the draft COVID-19 Operating Plan for Mount Washington State Park that will operate under the Safer at Home Reopening Guidance, using the Universal Guidance, Outdoor Attractions, Retail, and Food Service Industry Guidance. The Tip Top House remains closed, the summit parking lots and grounds are open. They discussed the various options and challenges for opening the Sherman Adams Building (SAB) based on the capacity of various areas within the building and allowing for social distancing, staff screening, sanitation measures, visitor behavior and signage. The members discussed the opening of the SAB at length. Parks will need to get the sewage treatment plant ready, program the online reservation system, configure the SAB for social distancing, hire staff and stock supplies: the exact date of opening is not yet known.

Mr Thayer said AMC's huts will remain closed, although limited hiker services will be available. Mr Kirsch said the Observatory's summit museum is currently closed due to the confined space and air flow. Coordination and revenue sharing of admission fees can be considered. Members discussed collaborative COVID-related messaging and summit operations.

Master Plan. There were no updates on the communications facilities study. Mr Presby said they are back to working on their revised summit track proposal, which was put on hold due to COVID.

Partner Reports. AMC. Mr Thayer said they started the year strong, but everything was shut down in March. AMC will offer limited services at the huts. They are providing virtual programming, advocating for the federal LWCF grant program, and deploying smaller trail crews. Additional reopening guidance is anticipated on July 1st, including guidance for lodging establishments.

Auto Road. Mr Wemyss reported a late Spring start due to weather. They are working on paving projects. They've had to cancel the Hill Climb event, but will offer a bicycle course on their trails. They hosted Gorham High School's graduation.

Cog Railway. Mr Presby said that their re-railing project will be finished by next week. They have started construction on their maintenance facility, scheduled for completion in October. The Cog started train operations to Waumbek Station on June 20th, and hope to start service to the summit by the end of July.

Townsquare Media. Mr Scamman said they are in good shape after the winter season and will continue to operate the two stations at the summit.

WMNF. Ms Benna reported that most areas with the WMNF are now open. Jeffrey Vail is the new Forest Supervisor, leaving his position in the DC office as Deputy Director for Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources. They are working with the White Mountain Trail Collective, deploying smaller trail crews and delaying other trail projects to next year.

MWObs. Mr Kirsch said the summit museum is closed so as to protect staff. They have reduced the number of summit staff to those essential to operations. They have shifted to virtual educational programs for kids.

AOB. Sen Bradley said that the MWC serves as an advisory body to DNCR. As decisions are made, he requests that DNCR update the MWC accordingly. The next MWC meeting is scheduled for Fri, Aug. 28th at Cannon Mountain Peabody Lodge. The agenda will include carrying capacity and a report on the advance reservation system that will be used by DNCR to manage public access to the SAB, based on COVID-19 guidance to allow for social distancing.

Adjourn. Mr Presby motioned to adjourn; seconded by Mr Ingersoll. The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m. by roll-call vote: Mr Scamman YES, Mr Thayer YES, Dir Bryce YES, Mr Presby YES, Mr Fitzgerald YES, Mr Bergeron YES, Mr Middleton YES, Rep Moynihan YES, Mr Wemyss YES, Mr Ingersoll YES, Sen Bradley YES, and Ms Benna YES.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.